



Plenary sitting

A8-0058/2018

6.3.2018

RECOMMENDATION

on the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros
(14423/2017 – C8-0447/2017 – 2017/0241(NLE))

Committee on Fisheries

Rapporteur: João Ferreira

Symbols for procedures

- * Consultation procedure
- *** Consent procedure
- ***I Ordinary legislative procedure (first reading)
- ***II Ordinary legislative procedure (second reading)
- ***III Ordinary legislative procedure (third reading)

(The type of procedure depends on the legal basis proposed by the draft act.)

CONTENTS

	Page
DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION.....	5
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT.....	6
OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT	8
PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....	12
FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE.....	13

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION

on the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros (14423/2017 – C8-0447/2017 – 2017/0241(NLE))

(Consent)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the draft Council decision (14423/2017),
 - having regard to the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros¹,
 - having regard to the request for consent submitted by the Council in accordance with Article 43 and Article 218(6), second subparagraph, point (a), of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (C8-0447/2017),
 - having regard to its non-legislative resolution of ...² on the draft decision,
 - having regard to Rule 99(1) and (4) and Rule 108(7) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the recommendation of the Committee on Fisheries and the opinion of the Committee on Development (A8-0058/2018),
1. Gives its consent to the denunciation of the Agreement;
 2. Instructs its President to forward its position to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and of the Union of the Comoros.

¹ OJ L 290, 20.10.2006, p. 7.

² Texts adopted of that date, P8_TA(0000)0000.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Union of the Comoros (Comoros) is a group of three main islands located in the western Indian Ocean, off the coast of East Africa. The archipelago, which has been independent since 1975, also contains a fourth island, Mayotte, which opted for French sovereignty.

According to 2013 figures, the Comoros has a population of around 734 000 inhabitants. The historical context, political instability and difficulty in accessing resources place the Comoros among the least developed countries, with an economy heavily dependent on foreign grants and technical assistance.

The fisheries sector is the second largest sector in the country, after agriculture, and is considered to be a strategic priority. It accounts for 10% of jobs and 8% of GDP (2013 figures). These percentages nevertheless reveal a decline in the sector's significance in terms of economic importance and employment, owing to its vulnerability to external factors – all domestic operations (8 000 fishermen) involve artisanal, small-scale activities using either small fibreglass boats 6-7 m in length, with an engine capacity of no more than 25 CV and with extremely rudimentary technical equipment, or non-motorised canoes.

The stocks that can be exploited in the Comoros EEZ – mostly large pelagic fish (tuna and swordfish) – are estimated at 33 000 tonnes per year, but annual catches made by local fishermen stand at around 16 000 tonnes. The remaining fish are caught by foreign industrial fleets and landed elsewhere. The fish are also processed outside the Comoros, including fish caught by the local fleet.

Bilateral fisheries relations between the European Union (and its predecessors) and the Comoros date back to 1988. From 2006 onwards, however, their relations have been governed by a Fisheries Partnership Agreement providing for a financial contribution with two distinct components: one for access to fisheries resources; and one geared to sectoral support to develop local capacities.

The Agreement under review in this report involved a total financial contribution of EUR 1 845 750, around 49% of which was earmarked for sectoral support. The Agreement allowed 45 licences to be granted for tuna seiners and 25 for surface longliners (shared between Spain, France and Portugal). This Agreement also required EU vessels operating under it to employ a minimum number of Comorian crew and included an exclusivity clause on the species to be fished.

Notwithstanding the conditions laid down in the Agreement and the associated protocol, its implementation was affected by various constraints – particularly relating to piracy – that meant that these fishing licences were not used. At the same time, the Comoros' involvement in operations in breach of the Regulation on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), in particular by allowing the reflagging of vessels involved in IUU fishing, led the EU to notify the Comoros in October 2015 of the possibility of its being identified as a non-cooperating country – which indeed happened in May and June 2017 (when it received a 'red card').

In the absence of any reaction by the Comorian authorities throughout this process, the Commission and Council are proposing that the Agreement be denounced.

On the whole, the rapporteur sees no reason to disagree with this denunciation of the agreement, but consideration should be given to two issues: the very precarious social situation in the Comoros; and a number of assessments made by UN bodies that criticise the EU's powerful position when it comes to drawing up agreements and setting the price of fish (paying below the estimated wholesale price for tuna), and point out that fisheries partnership agreements have failed to support the development of the local industry.

The rapporteur would like to stress the fact that, in almost 30 years of fisheries agreements between the EU and the Comoros – which included a component geared to cooperation and support for the development of the Comorian fisheries sector – it has not been possible to achieve more tangible results in the sector's development, including in fields such as monitoring and surveillance capacity, scientific development and technical training for fishermen and observers.

This assessment makes it essential, in the context of this decision, to put forward proposals designed to contribute to the continuity of support for development and help bring about an improvement in fisheries conditions in the Comoros, in related activities and in the quality of life for fishermen and fishing communities.

In this context of continued cooperation between the EU and the Comoros – notably in terms of development policy – it is important for the policy of the EU and its Member States vis-à-vis this country to focus on the strategic priorities, of which the fisheries sector is a central strand. The EU should thus continue to promote transfers that will enable the Comoros, among other things, to:

- improve its system for fisheries administration and governance in legal terms and with regard to the institutional structure, capacity building for human resources (fishermen, scientists, inspectors, etc.), and the commercial and cultural value of the Comoros' traditional gear and fish;
- develop its capacities with regard to monitoring and scientific assessment, coastal protection, inspection, surveillance and quality control;
- create or renovate facilities for refrigerating, distributing and processing fish;
- construct and upgrade landing and security infrastructure at ports and harbours;
- promote the renewal of the small-scale fleet to improve safety, ability to remain at sea and fishing capacity.

The rapporteur takes the view that sustainable fisheries agreements signed by the EU with third countries must be mutually beneficial and prioritise action to strengthen third countries' sovereignty over their fisheries, the development of related economic activities and protection for maritime resources, fishing communities and fishery workers. This type of development, and not the impoverishment of resources, is the most effective and fairest way of combating IUU fishing.

The rapporteur further requests that the European Parliament be informed immediately of any future developments in this process.

21.2.2018

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT

for the Committee on Fisheries

on the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros (14423/17 – C8-0447/2017 – 2017/0241(NLE))

Rapporteur: Norbert Neuser

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is widely recognised as a significant environmental, economic and social problem. It represents a major threat to marine ecosystems, an unfair disadvantage for responsible fishermen, and a disruption for the seafood market. Combatting IUU fishing has become a key means for achieving sustainable management of global fisheries.

Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to IUU fishing. With limited capacity for control and surveillance of their waters, they are usually targeted by IUU fishers, which further destabilises the management of their fisheries. Weak governance and high levels of IUU fishing usually go hand in hand. Finally, IUU fishing deprives developing countries of revenue and food.

A number of international instruments form the basis for the fight against IUU fishing. They coincide in the primary responsibility of the coastal state for ensuring compliance with the law of fishing activities in its waters, which is without prejudice to the obligation of due diligence of flag states.

The fight against IUU fishing is also a priority on the development cooperation agenda, as demonstrated by Sustainable Development Goal No 14 (“SDG 14”) on conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. SDG 14, target 4, calls for an end to overfishing, IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices.

Also, in numerous resolutions, the European Parliament has consistently highlighted the need for further action against all forms of IUU fishing. Against this background, the European Union adopted Regulation (EC) No 1005/2008 (the “IUU Regulation”), which includes a multiple-step procedure, including dialogue, to deal with non-cooperating countries.

Your rapporteur is satisfied with the Commission's explanations on the application of the non-cooperating third country procedure under the IUU Regulation to Comoros and therefore supports the proposal to denounce the fisheries agreement with this country.

Having said that, your rapporteur is in favour of a continued political dialogue with Comorian authorities leading to an improved governance of this country's fisheries. Your rapporteur also advocates for a reorientation of the assistance received by this country under other Union financial instruments so the population does not pay the cost of this state of affairs.

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on Fisheries, as the committee responsible, to recommend that Parliament give its consent to the draft Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros.

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Title	Council decision Denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros, adopted by Council Regulation (EC) No 1563/2006 of 5 October 2006
References	14423/2017 – C8-0447/2017 – COM(2017)0556 – 2017/0241(NLE)
Committee responsible	PECH
Opinion by Date announced in plenary	DEVE 15.1.2018
Rapporteur Date appointed	Norbert Neuser 11.12.2017
Discussed in committee	25.1.2018
Date adopted	20.2.2018
Result of final vote	+: 19 –: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Mireille D’Ornano, Nirj Deva, Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Maria Heubuch, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Arne Lietz, Norbert Neuser, Vincent Peillon, Cristian Dan Preda, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Eleftherios Synadinos, Eleni Theocharous, Paavo Väyrynen, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Anna Záborská, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Thierry Cornillet, Paul Rübig, Rainer Wieland

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

19	+
ALDE	Thierry Cornillet, Paavo Väyrynen
ECR	Nirj Deva, Eleni Theocharous
EFDD	Mireille D'Ornano
GUE/NGL	Lola Sánchez Caldentey
PPE	Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Cristian Dan Preda, Paul Rübig, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Rainer Wieland, Anna Záborská, Željana Zovko
S&D	Doru-Claudian Frunzulică, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Arne Lietz, Norbert Neuser, Vincent Peillon
VERTS/ALE	Maria Heubuch

1	-
NI	Eleftherios Synadinos

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

PROCEDURE – COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Title	Council decision Denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Community and the Union of the Comoros, adopted by Council Regulation (EC) No 1563/2006 of 5 October 2006	
References	14423/2017 – C8-0447/2017 – COM(2017)0556 – 2017/0241(NLE)	
Date of consultation / request for consent	18.12.2017	
Committee responsible Date announced in plenary	PECH 15.1.2018	
Committees asked for opinions Date announced in plenary	DEVE 15.1.2018	BUDG 15.1.2018
Not delivering opinions Date of decision	BUDG 9.10.2017	
Rapporteurs Date appointed	João Ferreira 13.10.2017	
Discussed in committee	28.11.2017	24.1.2018
Date adopted	27.2.2018	
Result of final vote	+	20
	-	0
	0:	2
Members present for the final vote	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Alain Cadec, David Coburn, Linnéa Engström, João Ferreira, Sylvie Goddyn, Mike Hookem, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, António Marinho e Pinto, Gabriel Mato, Norica Nicolai, Liadh Ní Riada, Ulrike Rodust, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Remo Sernagiotto, Isabelle Thomas, Ruža Tomašić, Peter van Dalen, Jarosław Wałęsa	
Substitutes present for the final vote	Norbert Erdős	
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Liliana Rodrigues	
Date tabled	6.3.2018	

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

20	+
ALDE	António Marinho e Pinto, Norica Nicolai
ECR	Peter van Dalen, Remo Sernagiotto, Ruža Tomašić
ENF	Sylvie Goddyn
GUE/NGL	João Ferreira, Liadh Ní Riada
PPE	Alain Cadec, Norbert Erdős, Carlos Iturgaiz, Werner Kuhn, Gabriel Mato, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Jarosław Wałęsa
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Liliana Rodrigues, Ulrike Rodust, Isabelle Thomas
VERTS/ALE	Linnéa Engström

0	-

2	0
EFDD	David Coburn, Mike Hookem

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention